

Kansas Delegation: GAO Report Short on Expertise, Long on Errors; NBAF Critical to Protect Nation's Food Supply

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Senators Pat Roberts and Sam Brownback, and U.S. Representatives Lynn Jenkins, Dennis Moore, Jerry Moran and Todd Tiahrt today released the following statement regarding the General Accounting Office's report on the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) analyses of whether Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) research can be conducted as safely on the mainland as on Plum Island:

“The report backhandedly discounts FMD research already conducted on the mainland in Canada, without any apparent basis in fact, and also ignores the fact that modern building technology allows research on dangerous human diseases in urban areas such as the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, GA.

“Given the fundamental errors in the report, the conclusions are highly suspect. DHS provided nearly 30 pages of technical comments and corrections to the draft and still the final report doesn't correctly list the results of DHS's site selection determinations. The report issued by GAO indicates that Kansas only ‘partly’ met the evaluation criteria for similar research efforts located ‘near’ the selected site.

“In fact, Kansas, due to the proximity of the Kansas State College of Veterinary Medicine its existing animal health corridor and the Biosecurity Research Institute, was ranked as meeting or exceeding all of the criteria related to existing research. This was a key determinant in the selection process. For GAO to work on this report for months and still not get this important fact right calls into question its entire report.

"The DHS analysis that ultimately chose to locate the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) in Kansas followed a six year process with risk, environmental and security assessments based on a National Academies of Science report and peer review by USDA and other outside experts.

"DHS has said it will continue to work with Congress to ensure this critically important facility is properly designed and constructed to protect the nation's food supply and agriculture. As Secretary Napolitano said earlier this week, we intend to move forward with placing the lab in Manhattan, Kansas."

"Congress has already appropriated \$80 million for the project, with more to come.

"The greatest threat to agriculture and the food supply in America is not having modern biocontainment facilities to conduct critical research. Our nation is not prepared to handle natural, accidental or intentional outbreaks of animal diseases. We cannot afford further politically motivated delay."

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